

Emily Wroblewski
Proponent Testimony HB 602
June 26, 2024

Public Health Policy Committee — HB 602 — Proponent Testimony

Chairman Mathews, Vice Chair Stewart, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Public Health Policy Committee, my name is Emily Wroblewski and I am thankful for the opportunity to share how homeschool cooperatives, or co-ops, are a foundational part of the learning experience. I am in a unique position to speak to you today as someone who was homeschooled and participated in co-ops, a mother who proudly homeschools her three children, and as a founder and administrator of a local homeschooling co-op.

Homeschool co-ops, defined as “learning pods” in HB 602, are an invaluable part of the homeschool experience. These co-ops allow families to cultivate relationships with fellow homeschoolers and collectively learn from one another. Every co-op is different but in the ones I have been involved in the parents have had a pivotal role in teaching, coaching, and sharing their passion for the subjects they care about. Children have a great opportunity to participate and learn about things that would have otherwise been too messy, too difficult, or too expensive to do as a single family unit. Co-ops are incredibly important as they allow families to share resources, subject knowledge, and activities which could never be experienced without a fellow community. As a homeschooling parent I cannot overstate the value of spending time with other home educating families. These communities bring parents together to increase their own knowledge, discuss curriculum choices, and share in the struggles and triumphs of their children’s education.

Co-ops meet for a variety of learning goals and no two groups are exactly the same. For any given co-op you might see students learning about STEM, arts and theater, domestic skills, literature and writing, or nature studies. And while these groups are organized around learning, many life-long friendships are cultivated through these gatherings.

The law on record, RC 5104.02, has not historically been applied to homeschool co-ops or learning pods, and rightly so. Not only do co-ops traditionally meet during school hours, but at our co-op in particular, the children’s parents are the primary educators. Co-ops are not day care centers but communities where parents and children learn alongside one another to provide an education that best fits each student. I am asking this council to consider amending the current law to exclude home educating co-ops, referenced as learning pods, from RC 5104.02. Failure to do so could cause great hardship to many homeschooling families and unnecessarily isolate them from one another.

Thank you for your time and consideration.